



Paramyxovirus infection in pigeons: Victoria situation report

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Issued by the Victorian Department of Primary Industries for the pigeon and related industries.

Situation Analysis

- DPI continues to strongly recommend that exhibitions, sales, shows and races be cancelled until further notice, and that pigeon owners prevent contact with other racing, fancy and wild pigeons, both directly and indirectly.
- Vaccination, if it works and is safe, will not be the silver bullet - stopping the mixing of pigeons will be what contains this outbreak.
- There are now 24 infected properties in Victoria.
- Over the past 24 hours one new infected property has been identified.
- PMV1 has now been detected in both racing pigeons and fancy pigeons.
- No poultry or wild birds have tested positive to paramyxovirus.

Background

- Since late August 2011, a paramyxovirus not previously reported in Australia has been detected in hobby pigeons on a number of properties in Victoria.
- Affected pigeon flocks have experienced high mortalities, associated with lethargy, gastrointestinal and neurological signs.
- The virus was confirmed as avian paramyxovirus type 1 by the Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL).

Actions taken in Victoria

- The Incident Management Team (IMT) established at Attwood by the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) continues with its primary objective of identifying the extent of the disease and limiting its spread where possible.
- Confirmed cases are located in Shepparton/Tatura area and outer suburbs of Melbourne, extending to the south west as far as Hoppers crossing, to the south east as far as Cranbourne and to the north as far as Epping
- Investigations are being undertaken by DPI to determine possible links between known infected properties and to detect other affected properties.
- Reports of sick or dead birds from industry, veterinarians and the public are also being investigated by DPI.
- Movements of birds to and from known infected properties are being investigated to determine possible sources of infection and the extent of disease spread. Further movements of birds from these properties are being restricted to limit the chances of further spread.
- Movement of infected birds appears to be the principal method that the disease has spread. Investigations to date suggest that other forms of spread, for example by feed, are not significant.
- DPI is strongly recommending that exhibitions, shows and races (including tossing) of pigeons be cancelled until further notice to limit mixing of birds whilst the extent of disease spread is determined. Owners and organisations are voluntarily complying which is commendable.
- Vaccination advice for pigeon owners wishing to vaccinate their pigeons has been distributed and is available on the DPI website. It is of paramount importance that the birds vaccinated are healthy and within healthy flocks, that the vaccine is used in

consultation with a veterinarian, and that pigeon owners ensure high standards of biosecurity to limit the chance of introduction of infection into their flocks. Flocks not introducing infection would have no need for vaccination.

- An extensive media and communications effort has been undertaken to inform veterinarians, industry and the public about the incident, to increase awareness and provide information about what to look out for, who to contact and measures that can be undertaken to limit the risk to their birds. Information is being provided by media release, direct contact, the DPI website and email.
- To assist pigeon owners mitigate the risks, DPI is promoting good biosecurity practices and movement limitation.
- **Suspected cases of paramyxovirus infection should be reported to the DPI by phoning 136 186 during business hours or 1800 675 888 after hours.**

Dr Iain McLaren
Acting Chief Veterinary Officer, Victoria

